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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

EXTRAORDINARY emergencies usually call forth extraordinary exertions; and in dangerous and difficult times the human character assumes a variety, boldness, and decision which fits it for encountering obstacles and meeting the crisis with effect. Examples of this are frequent in history; but we, in these days, have such demonstration of it as the page of history cannot furnish. A revolution of unexampled magnitude, and attended with stupendous consequences has taken place before our eyes; and a nation deemed incapable of great exertions, or of the perseverance necessary to crown meritorious efforts with success,

has, by a change of circumstances, become the most prominent object on the face of the globe.

Arbitrary power long continued, and formed into a regular system in France, seemed to affect the physical qualities of the people; and the notorious and avowed corruption pervading every department of the government, had a pernicious influence on their moral principle. This was an unnatural state of society, and the disorder having reached its height, a powerful re-action of the constitution burst asunder all the social relations, and expelled the evil rooted in the core. This is the natural tendency of despotism: in those

subjected to its baleful influence it first paralyses the wholesome energies implanted by nature, then poisons the source of all honourable sentiment and feeling, and having sufficiently degraded its victim, at length outraged humanity rebels and tardy vengeance recoils on the authors of so much evil.

Were the authors of the mischief only to suffer, we might be willing to leave things to their natural course; but in great political convulsions, the innocent being the more numerous class are generally in that proportion the greater sufferers, and their efforts at relief often serve only to aggravate and prolong their calamity. It becomes then the duty of every *real* friend of social order to rouse the attention of the community to what is interesting to all, to endeavour to fix society on a firm foundation, and see that it contributes more to individual happiness than that state of nature enjoyed by the wild uncultivated tribes of Africa and America. France ought to be an effectual warning to all governments, as it is an awful example to all bad ones. The revolution of 1688, in our own country was not half so impressive; that might be considered as the natural impatience of a people tolerably accustomed to the blessings of freedom, at seeing before their eyes the ignominious fetters of tyranny forged for their subjugation. A people used to controul their kings, might easily be supposed willing on an emergency to get rid of a bad one; but for a nation immersed in slavery, as the body of the French were, by whom the revolution was accomplished, for such a one to rise as if by inspiration, assert their rights and avenge their wrongs; this is a spectacle for statesmen to contemplate; this shows that the cord if stretched too tight will snap at last. The success of the French on the Continent has been less owing to the energy infused by the revolution, than to the folly of the Continental governments, but we need not say more of those who would hazard the safety and independence of their native land by clinging to abuses by which they thrive, and draining the heart's blood from an ill governed and discontented country. We may withdraw a while

from scenes of such infatuation and weakness, and without confining ourselves by local views, consider the path which a wise people would pursue under certain circumstances.

Suppose a nation long accustomed to much civil and political freedom, enjoying many privileges, some founded on immemorial usage, and others on written records agreed to by the different parties in the state, empowered for that purpose, and all these together forming what is called the constitution of the country. That this written and unwritten constitution is expressly allowed to be the birth-right of all, is held up to each individual as the most valuable inheritance, which he ought to esteem above all other enjoyments and the only safeguard and guarantee of them all. That it is committed in trust to a body of men to be managed for the behoof of the great mass of the people, by the free suffrage of whom the constitution supposes the former to be chosen. That the people are attached to this order of things, have made extraordinary sacrifices for its support, and would hazard their lives to defend it from foreign aggression.

Should a people so circumstanced begin at length to perceive that the body to whom the constitution is entrusted, and to whom is committed the charge of watching over their immediate interests, is not chosen as the constitution intends; is *not* their real representative, and does not regulate its conduct by the clearly expressed national opinion; that many flagrant abuses take place in the management of their affairs, which the constitution endeavoured to prevent; and that the constitution has not provided the only adequate remedy for these grievances, by prescribing *how* the representative body shall be made the true organ of the People's will. Should this knowledge become general in the nation, and especially from the recent discovery of certain untoward events, make them discontented with the present administration of the constitution, and urgently desirous that at least what is called the popular Branch of the constitutional Tree may be freed from the influence of the other orders and transferred to them.

for their proper use and benefit.—In such a situation what should be the conduct of a wise government, even without any reference to external circumstances, or the present alarming state of the world? In such a country with a high sense of political liberty, and smarting under an extreme pressure of taxation, would it be prudent to make a general stand against “popular encroachment,” and crush by penal statutes that spirit of inquiry which now pervades the nation.

We think this is the fatal policy which has led to the almost total overthrow of the Continental powers; by condemning and opposing the voice of the people, some of them were absolutely destroyed, and by refusing to ameliorate the condition of their subjects, others have found them passive and insensible in the hour of danger. It cannot be so in the country we have contemplated; even should government be unwilling to yield up the undue influence it has acquired, the example of former times will intrude and make the voice of reason be heard; and conciliatory measures promptly pursued, will drown the voice of discontent and faction. It is not enough that the constitution of the government be beautiful in theory, it must be felt, must come to the mass of the people in a ‘tangible shape,’ in order to gain their affections, and be supported by them with energy. The people are wise enough now to know that government is a thing contrived for their use, and that whenever it lessens their comforts, curtails their privileges, or refuses minute attention to their complaints, it ceases to be legitimate, and loses all claim to their veneration and regard. As they are now awakening from a slumber that might have been fatal, let them publicly and freely make known the object they are in pursuit of, and the means by which they would desire to enjoy it; it is better that opinions be freely expressed, than silence imposed on a nation till it is urged into dangerous excess. It is time for these countries to assert their right to the enjoyment of the constitution in its purity; we believe it to be the best in the world, and better adapted to mankind, *as they are* than any other; but in the lapse of time, like all other human establishments,

it has contracted imperfections, which spoil its beauty, and impair its power to answer the purpose of its institution—the happiness of those embodied under its protection. A periodical renovation of it would seem necessary to recall men’s attention to first principles; and it might be well, if, after the revolution of each half century at most, some mode were adopted of giving it a solemn revision, corresponding with the importance of the object, by an extra-deputation of persons appointed for that particular purpose.

We conceive that the duty we owe society, calls upon us to turn the attention of our fellow-citizens to the crisis in which they are placed: the present times are fertile in great political changes: we stand in a comparatively enviable situation, and the form of our government is admirable; but reduced to practice—it wants the vigour of youth and the energy of virtue: it wants diffusion through all classes of the people, in order to insure *their* happiness, and render it stable as the soil they inhabit. Then, while time and opportunity still continues, as they value the blessings of freedom themselves, and would wish to transmit them unimpaired to their posterity, let them become the artificers of their own destiny: Let them consider the present eventful period till they acquire a character that shall rise superior to difficulties, and find security in its own resources; and by a steady perseverance in temperate measures, let them endeavour, either to force the interested part of the community to a seasonable acquiescence with the wishes of the whole; or where the letter of the constitution is silent, yet in strict conformity with its spirit, to devise means to correct and prevent the recurrence of abuses which destroy the public morals, and sap the foundations of national safety.

Since our last month’s notice, the public attention, as to foreign affairs, has been chiefly directed to the French and Austrian armies. These immense engines of human destruction are wielded by the contending Emperors with disproportioned power, and unequal skill; and this we fear it has not been attempted to equalize during the interval of *actual* hostility, by

extending advantages to the subjects of the weaker country, which would have secured their effectual assistance now, when become essentially necessary. Even when an unexpected check was given to the French arms—which, like the famous Bantry-bay expedition to our own country, was accomplished more by the elements than by valour or the wisdom of councils. We hear of no exultation, no attempt of the people to rise and help to expel their invaders; and in the countries already traversed by the victorious army, whenever the regular force is beaten, taken, or expelled, they seem so entirely subdued that the troops are drawn away, as if there were no apprehension of danger from them.

The three days' interruption that Bonaparte experienced at Vienna, and the breaking down of the bridge over the Danube, on the retreat of the Austrians, was favourable to their cause. The Archduke Charles made use of the time from the 12th to the 20th of May, in collecting the scattered divisions of his army, and occupying a favourable position on the left bank. The French head-quarters at this time were at Ebersdorf, a town a few leagues to the south-east of Vienna, where the river is intersected by two islands, the larger, In der Loban, nearer to the left, or north bank. Here, having constructed three bridges over as many arms into which the river is divided by the islands, the French began to pass on the night of the 20th of May, and occupied two villages, Essling and Asperne, on the north bank. About noon the next day, the 21st, the Archduke, with 90,000 men and 200 pieces of cannon, according to the French accounts, attacked the enemy, consisting, by the Austrian bulletins, of 80,000 men, and a most obstinate engagement ensued, and continued, until night separated the combatants. The battle was renewed, with sanguinary violence on the morning of the 22d. The French and Austrians, each claim the superiority on these two days; and there may now appear a difficulty in deciding where victory would have remained; but an accident beyond the reach of human prudence or calculation, left the hard-earned fruits entirely with the Austrians. A sudden swelling of the Danube, which gene-

rally takes place later in the season, carried away two of the bridges which had been constructed with so much labour, and cut off the French from receiving any more supplies either of men or ammunition, from the right or south side, and leaving the army engaged with the Austrians only a communication with the island of In der Loban, by the bridge which had escaped. In this most critical situation, Bonaparte ordered his army to retreat and concentrate itself, and at night it passed over into the island of In der Loban, still having a communication with the left bank, by keeping possession of the Tete du Pont.

We may remark here on the exultation manifested at this check given to the French arms, and the weak conclusions drawn from it, as if Bonaparte were now deprived of the power to commit farther mischief. We might, indeed rejoice were the inordinate ambition of this man restrained, were the armies of the Emperor Francis able to repel the inroads of his legions, or were the prostrate dynasties of Europe at length roused from their degradation, and prepared to oppose his power, with the only effective arms, the arms of JUSTICE and FREEDOM. In this case the effusion of human blood, and the increase of human misery might be restrained, and society in general reap some advantage; but unless some of these consequences are likely to ensue, we need not exult, although we must feel pleased that the destruction of our ally is interrupted, and that there is a probability of some better terms being procured by him on that account. As to ourselves, fourteen millions of people surrounded by a better rampart than the Danube, need neither exult nor despond at the defeats or successes of Bonaparte; a good government, union and comfort at home would render us secure from him, were all the rest of Europe lying under his feet. We apprehend, however, that the conclusions drawn from Bonaparte's retreat across the Danube, and the unexpected success of the Archduke, are wholly unwarranted by these events. In the battles of the 21st and 22d, if the advantage had not been with the French, how could they afterwards have retreated so orderly, by a

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single bridge, into the island of In der Loban? and had the Archduke beat them so completely as he represents in his bulletins, why did he not continue the action until their ammunition was expended, and while they were cut off from a supply, by a decisive effort, annihilate this army, which would undoubtedly have compelled Bonaparte to a precipitate retreat from the Austrian dominions? On these accounts, we conceive Bonaparte to be equally formidable as when he advanced to Vienna. His army has sustained considerable loss 1,100 killed, and 3,000 wounded by his own statement, and many superior officers, among whom are three Generals and Marshal Lasnes (Duke of Montebello) who died a few days after the action of the 22d; but it is probable the loss of the Austrians is not inferior; and as the army of Italy formed a junction with him on the 26th of May, at Bruck, within two or three days' march of Vienna, and Bernadotte is advancing on the north of the Danube, with a large reinforcement, besides the numerous bodies of troops ordered from the Tyrol, which seems now perfectly tranquillized, we may shortly expect to hear of some of those immense operations which astonish the world after his apparent temporary suspension.

The Archduke John, who commanded the Austrians in Italy must have retired far from that country, although we are unacquainted with the details as the Italian army had advanced as far as Graz in Carinthia, and to Bruck, on the road to Vienna; and the Duke of Ragusa (Marmont) was marching from Dalmatia, with his division to form a junction with it.

In Poland the Archduke Ferdinand, after the capture of Warsaw, proceeded along the Vistula, took Thorn, and was going on towards Dantzic; but we are informed that he has now commenced his retreat to Germany.

The Russian declaration of war against Austria, bears date Petersburg the 5th of May, and we hear of her troops advancing to the Austrian frontier: should Bonaparte's situation appear at all hazardous, we doubt not but all the means of this mighty empire would be employed for his support.

Of Turkey we know nothing: neither can the movements of that chaotic mass possess any interest compared with the present critical state of the other parts of Europe.

It is with some concern that we advert to the difficulties in which Sweden finds herself placed. The Emperor of Russia in respect to her, has occupied the ground we took for refusing to treat of peace with France in the early periods of the revolution. Instability of the government, social order, and revolutionary example, are profaned in *his* mouth, and made the infamous pretexts for refusing their proffered friendship, and for endeavouring, with his disproportioned force, to overwhelm that unfortunate country. Now is the time for the interposition of England: let her now send a portion of that fleet and army which are wasting their strength in Portugal, for an object which we must lose, to assist the Swedes in conquering peace, and defending that constitution and king, which they themselves have chosen.

In Portugal, Sir Arthur Wellesley, after the re-capture of Oporto, and defeating the rear of Soult's corps, followed up his success with all his characteristic rapidity; but after a severe fatiguing pursuit through a difficult country, he was obliged to return without having overtaken that officer. The French, we understand are now entirely out of Portugal: of their operations in Spain we know little with certainty, except that the province of Asturias was very unexpectedly attacked by them sometime ago, when they were not thought to be in force in that neighbourhood; Oviedo, the capital, taken, from whence Romana and the bishop with difficulty effected their escape; the latter having arrived in England; and the whole province seems to be now in possession of the French. It must give pleasure to the friends of liberty to learn, that there is now under the consideration of the Supreme Junta, at Seville, a *truly* patriotic proclamation to the Spanish people, and a plan for the formation of a National Constitution, for the most part on liberal principles, and providing for individual protection and an equal distribution of law and justice to the community, by a proper repre-

sensation of the people in the Cortez, or general estates of the kingdom. This, if carried into effect, may yet do some good; although we fear it is too late to revive the flame of patriotism, which, if ever really kindled, is, by injudicious measures, misfortunes, and disappointment, now nearly extinguished.

Our relations with America, instead of becoming more simple and defined, seem every day to be getting more perplexed and intricate. As soon as we are gratified by hearing that our minister in America had come to such an understanding, and made such arrangements with that government as promised a speedy termination to all our disputes, we are officially informed by our ministry at home that he had exceeded his powers, and acted in direct opposition to his instructions. What the consequence of this vacillation in our councils may be, we cannot tell, but we fear that the disgust and disappointment in America will be in proportion to the almost extravagant joy manifested by them at the supposed amicable termination of our differences.

We remember, before the unfortunate commencement of hostilities with France, in 1793, how anxious that people were to preserve peace with England, how highly they praised and esteemed Englishmen, and how their love for this country seemed really to have become a national feeling—arising probably from the recent change in their circumstances; and we all now know that the prevalence of evil councils have accomplished as complete a revolution in this respect, as ever took place in the sentiments and feelings of any people: We fervently hope that the present protracted negotiations with America may end differently; but the prevailing sentiments of administration and their unknown diplomatic abilities, give very considerable ground for apprehension.

ENGLAND.

However the bloody contests on the Continent may terminate, whether the old governments have yet so much of the spirit of vitality remaining, as to survive the present crisis, or whether they succumb to the rising fortunes of the new dynasty, which the true lovers of liberty cannot but wish to fall in its turn ere long, to

make room for a better order of things than the present military despotism; we have still more important objects, and of much nearer interest to us, to engage our attention in our domestic struggles, to settle our liberties on a securer basis.

During the dynasty of the Stuarts, prerogative was unblushingly avowed. James the first laid the foundation for the misfortunes of his family, in his favourite doctrine of "the right divine of kings to govern wrong." His son Charles, the first, was a proficient in this school, and to the favourite system of king-craft added the vice of hypocrisy. Charles the second uninstructed by misfortunes, was, after his restoration, profligate in private life, and tyrannical in his maxims and manner of government, and his ill-fated successor, the imbecile James, justly forfeited his crown by his adherence to the doctrines and practice of the family.

In succeeding reigns prerogative gradually gave place to the insinuating vices of *corruption*, till at length Sir Robert Walpole digested this new plan of governing into a system, and with the effrontery of a vicious heart, avowed, "that every man had his price." We hesitate not to declare that this assertion is untrue, and a libel against human nature, and yet we must acknowledge with sorrow, that too many have, as far as regarded themselves, justified the truth of this misanthropic maxim. Corruption is the enemy whom we have to encounter, whose maturity of years and strength has become truly formidable, and whose inroads on the constitution, during the last forty or fifty years, have been great and alarming.

It is consolatory, however, to the friends of peace and stability, to find that a considerable degree of public spirit is lately revived in England; for the *Constitution improved* affords the best security against foreign enemies, as well as against the no less dangerous enemies, the abettors of corruption at home, and gives the most secure basis for permanent tranquillity. The force of popular feeling has an evident effect on the house of commons, and public censure to a certain degree exerts a salutary corrective influence within their walls. It must be allowed that some assert corruption is necessary to the existence

of government in whatever hands, and tells us "tis our charter;" Percival concedes by inches, and exerts all his sophistry and special pleading to fritter away, and undo his concessions; yet still if we view the progress of affairs during the present session, the influence of the people has considerably increased. At the commencement of the session, the haughty language of defiance and disdain was hurled against the intrepid Wardle, and the small band of reformers who supported him. Instructed by their defeat, the ministry became more cautious, and avoided meeting with any more tangible instances of corruption: they resisted general inquiry, and loudly proclaimed their innocence; but when afterwards challenged to particular instances in the persons of some of the chief members of administration, they shrunk back and wished for no more examinations at the bar. They have assumed a lower tone, but show no disposition to remove the radical existence of evils, of which they cannot deny the existence.

In London and Edinburgh the friends to the old system have celebrated the birth-day of Pitt, by public dinners. This may be considered as a plan to counteract the public meetings in favour of reform, and as a rallying point for the scattered forces of ministers and their expectants. Placemen and pensioner filled the tables, and with the enthusiasm of three times three, drank success to the system, whence they had their gains; but the people, groaning under the weight of taxation, had no inducements to sympathize in their mirth. They attempted to revive the old watch-words against liberty, and with entire consistency adopted the ominous name of Pitt as their signal. Yet who that dispassionately considers the present state of Europe, the enormous weight of taxation, and the abridgement of liberty in the British isles, all justly referable to his counsels, or the counsels of those who secretly and behind the curtain, directed him, can wish for a continuation of that system, which has in its effects proved so fatal, and to which in his keen sensations of regret in the eminent failure of it, he himself probably fell a victim?

In the struggle between reform

and corruption, if the people had directed their attention exclusively against the present ministry, it is probable they must have retired from place; and their opponents appeared at one time to anticipate their triumph: but now according to the whining speech of Mr. Tierney, they are displeased at the want of confidence justly shown towards them. The resolutions from Bristol, for which see the Official Documents, page 478, boldly declare that the co-operation of men interested in the continuance of corruption is neither looked for nor desired. Among the opposition, not a few enjoy sinecure places, and they all probably wish again to taste the sweets of office, without any abridgement of the means of gratifying their craving after the emoluments of place. To neither of the old parties can the people look with confidence for the removal of abuses.

Mr. Whitbread's motion to pledge parliament to take up early in the next session, the consideration of limiting the number of placemen, and to exclude pensioners from sitting in the house of commons, as also a motion to abridge the number of sinecures, were both negatived.

The bill introduced by Mr. Curwen has passed through the house of commons. At its first introduction it did not appear to possess sufficient strength or energy to accomplish its title, to prevent the sale of seats in parliament; but its inefficacy has been still further increased by the insidious conduct of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He has succeeded to mould it to his own views; and still farther than in the original bill, to give a monopoly of boroughs to the treasury. He has contrived to guard against conviction, by requiring that a place should be *expressly* given, for the purpose of procuring a vote, so that no one who is not a bungler, or who is not clumsy-fingered in his practice of bribing, is in danger of suffering under the penalties of this accommodating and latitudinarian bill. So long as offices are, by connivance, permitted to be given instead of money, the evil intended to be prevented by the original bill, must be increased, because a man who purchases his seat with his own money may be independent, while the retainers of the treasury must

necessarily have an *incubus* operating on them, so as to injure their independence. The oath to be taken by the *elected* against having practised bribery is also removed, though while the *elector* is forced to swear, it would be difficult to show why, a fortiori, the *elected* should be exempted from the exculpation of an oath against bribery. Oaths, however, are easily evaded, and they seldom operate to check villiany. Heavy penalties easily recoverable, would have probably produced the most effectual check against the practice of purchasing seats, which the speaker of the house of commons, in an energetic speech, pronounced to be a violation of the constitution. But to stop the trade of corruption, or to restore the constitution, is seldom the aim of men hackneyed in the artifices of governing.

Lord Folkstone, with great propriety, moved that the title of the bill should be, "A bill for the more effectually preventing the sale of seats in parliament for money, and for promoting the monopoly thereof to the treasury, by means of patronage." But although his motion was negatived, yet during the progress of the bill through the house of lords, where it finally passed, it was supported by the lords in administration, and the Earl of Liverpool especially defended it, because it was a measure not connected with the reform of parliament.

Sir Francis Burdett, after a long speech, in which he showed that the present system of rotten boroughs, was equally prejudicial to the prerogative of the king, and the rights of the people, and only advantageous to a small portion of the aristocracy, the borough-mongers, to prevent any longer a misrepresentation of his opinions on the subject, proceeded to detail his plan, for a more equal representation of the people, and shortening the duration of parliaments, and concluded with moving a resolution, that the house would early in next session proceed to consider the state of the representation. This reasonable proposal was supported by the small minority of 15, among whom we only recognize one Irishman, Mr. Hutchinson.

In taking a view of the parliamentary proceedings of this month, we cannot omit to notice the fate of a

bill introduced by Lord Erskine to prevent cruelty to animals. It passed through the house of Lords, and was finally rejected before the third reading in the commons. It was acknowledged by the supporters of the bill to be the commencement of a new era in legislation, but the idea was scouted by the class of obscurants, or bedarkners, and anti-reformists. Animals have their rights, and as yet, cruelty towards them is only punished from a reference to the interest of the owners, without consideration of the wanton cruelties inflicted on them through inhumanity and caprice. There was a consistency, however, in the opposition of the enemies of reform, to this *measure of improvement*. Windham who some years ago, successfully opposed a bill to prevent the barbarous and brutalizing practice of bull-baiting, lest it should diminish the courage (he should have more appropriately termed it ferocity) of the English, was steady to his principles on this occasion, and moved that the third reading of the bill should be deferred for three months. Such is the progress of civilization in the first decennium of the 19th century.

Approaching now to the close of the parliamentary campaign, we must again advert to the respectable champion against corruption, G. Lloyd Wardle, to whose exertions, accompanied with so much coolness and moderation we are so highly indebted, and who by his unveiling the atrocities connected with the war department, gave the first impetus to the desire for reform. It is curious to hear with what calumnies he is assailed by the friends of corruption: and if unblushing impudence were not so common as not to excite surprise, it would be not without astonishment, that we hear the advocates for a vigour beyond the law, and even men who themselves were among the foremost in committing acts of outrage, bring forward an accusation against him for his conduct in Ireland, when with his regiment, the Ancient Britons, in the memorable years of 1797 and 1798. It is not our intention to be the apologists for their outrages, and if any of his individual acts were improper, we shall not attempt to palliate them; though for the acts com-

mitted by his troop under the authority of magistrates, even though in his presence, we find some excuse from the temper of the times, and his liability to be led astray by misrepresentation, of a country with which he was unacquainted, and his being in a situation, in which he was particularly exposed to the imbibing of prejudices. We have heard no well authenticated instance of any act of cruelty committed by him, but even if such should be substantiated, we should grieve at the fallible nature of man, but should not be disposed on that account to reject him, or his present services; nor do we ask the aid of men, who were themselves actors in similar tragedies, to be the first to throw blame on him, who, even if formerly led astray in the mistaken fervor of youthful zeal is now in his riper years, atoning for the errors of his youth. We are therefore willingly inclined to accept his present well-directed endeavours. Being frequently urged by his opponents, he at length came forward with his plan for saving many millions to the state; if the public purse were well taken care of by the house of commons, who, if truly the representatives of the people, and sympathizing with them, would be the watchful guardians of it. In the course of his speech he pointed out many abuses in the different departments; and concluded with motions for papers further to elucidate his assertions.* Ministers promised to

* An Estimate of the Savings in the National Expenditure, as stated by Mr. Wardle, on his motion for Papers, in the House of Commons:

Army	6,182,000
Management of Revenue	1,440,000
Commissioners of Accounts and Inquiry }	75,000
Pensions.....	300,000
Colonies.....	500,000
Bounties.....	150,000
Allowances on Debt.....	210,000
Military Expenditure of Ireland.....	2,000,000
<hr/>	
£10,857,000	

The savings in the Naval department would fully make the total of *Eleven Millions!* and cover any errors in rating the savings in the other departments too high.

bring forward such accounts as he wanted, as far they could at the beginning of the next session, and if they were not satisfactory, it was understood he might then move for further returns. We cherish the hope that he will overcome all opposition to his laudable exertions in detecting abuses, and that next session we shall behold him renewing his labours with unabated ardour, cheered by the approbation of the thinking and virtuous part of the community.

According to a resolution of the house of Commons, the amount of the national debt of Great Britain is stated to be 567 millions!

On the 21st, parliament was prorogued by commission. The most prominent part of the speech as connected with our domestic politics, is an exhortation, "to inculcate both by instruction and example, a spirit of attachment to the established laws, and the happy constitution of these countries."

From the manner of mentioning the subject, we may perceive the dread which ministers entertain of reform. The watch-word of the ministerial party, by which they hope to defeat all attempts at renovation, is the constitution. They seek to persuade that all the abuses which have been already detected, and the thousand which still remain behind, are integral and necessary parts of the constitution, and that the constitution will be destroyed, if its defects are removed.

The session is now closed, it will be a memorable one in the annals of the united empire.

Whether the important and unexpected events which have taken place, in consequence of the investigation into abuses, will prove the commencement of an era of reform, and consequent happiness; whether the popular fervour will again subside into apathy, or what consequences may be the result, remain inscrutable to human ken. Let the termination be as it may, the present crisis will be important in history. The people, in a more general way than they have for several preceding years, demand reform. The two houses of parliament, and the active agents of government, do not appear

to participate in this feeling, further than as they in a few instances admitted the power of popular opinion, and gave way, or appeared to give way, to its influence.

But the people in many places are aroused; even now, while this Retrospect is penning, the inhabitants of the county of Essex are on the eve of meeting to vindicate their rights, to assemble and deliberate on public events, as after two applications the sheriff had refused to call a meeting of that county. It remains to be seen whether during the present recess of parliament, the popular opinion will be decidedly and unequivocally expressed in favour of reform. Much will undoubtedly be done to lull the people into a state of indifference, but if they do express their sentiments in favour of reform, with firmness and moderation, we think ministers will concede; and parliament in the next session may probably recognize the just rights of the people to a correction of abuses. Whatever may be attempted by sap, the period to revive the system of terror we trust will not be again attempted. Our present cabinet do not appear to possess the destructive energies of a Pitt.

SCOTLAND.

In our last month's Retrospect we alluded to the rising spirit of our Scottish neighbours. For this month our information from that quarter is scanty.

At the celebration of Mr. Pitt's birth-day at Edinburgh, Lord Melville made a speech, in which after talking of the great landmarks of the constitution, and against reformers, he expressed his determination to act in case attempts should be made to do away abuses or according to his phrase, to alter old established usages, to follow the practice of his friend whose memory they were met to celebrate. But we ask is speculation one "of the established usages of the constitution," or one of "those blessings, which these countries afford to all descriptions of men." In truth the selfish interests of PECULATORS and the interests of the nation are widely different. We have not heard whether the noted Alexander Trotter of peculating memory attended to support his noble patron and partner on this occasion.

It is worthy of notice that the Edinburgh Reviewers in their last number, are entirely silent on the subject of reform, or the removal of abuses, though the recent investigation in parliament on the Duke of York's business, and other instances of corruption gave so good an opportunity of explaining their sentiments on these subjects.—They have on several instances lately professed manly and virtuous sentiments: but this late omission gives room to suspect that their patriotism is guided by the politics of the old opposition party in parliament: and this party have on the late occasions displayed no energy in detecting abuses. In an article on the biography of those who figured in the French revolution, the Reviewers discover their aristocratic prejudices, and seek to inspire a dread of reform. But it is not fair to charge the excesses of the French to this cause, solely, or principally? The despotism of their former government, and the coalition of princes against their newly regenerated liberty assisted to prepare the crisis of delirium. The skilful physician examines the predisposing causes which produce the deleterious effects of a wide-spreading epidemic. The French Revolution has failed hitherto to produce the good effects which the friends of liberty expected from it, but it is not a legitimate conclusion that all attempts to procure reform will end in a similar disappointment.

IRELAND.

As an examination into the grievance of tithes is a measure connected with the best interests of our country, we sincerely regret that Mr. Parnell's motion, for an address to appoint commissioners to inquire into this subject, was negatived. It was a temperate manner of proceeding, which left time for further consideration. We fear it is intended to afford no relief in this case, and if so, it was consistent to make no inquiry.

The Commissioners for inquiring into the state of Education in Ireland, have made a report to Parliament in this session. It appears to contain much important matter. We hope shortly to present our readers with a full detail of its contents.

Our Irish finance minister has been

again left in a minority, on a clause in the Irish Revenue regulation bill, which exempted officers from actions for taking bribes from distillers, previous to 1808. The introduction of such a clause was disgraceful to the officers who needed such an amnesty, and to their superiors who so long permitted such conduct to pass unnoticed. Now that the nation is a little aroused to look into abuses, a plea is set up, that there should be no examination of the past. As well might there be a bill introduced to prevent criminal prosecutions against persons guilty of picking pockets prior to 1808. The clause was evidence of criminality against the actors in such scenes, whether as principals or accessaries; but members of boards might be restrained from inquiry into abuses of inferior officers, by a consciousness of wanting that indulgence which they showed to others. Great mismanagement exists in the financial department. Ministers, as long as they could, liked to lay on fresh taxes, because they had thus the means of extending their influence through the country, by the appointment of additional collectors. Evasions were practised, and the actual receipts into the treasury fell far short of what might have been the produce of the taxes well managed. It would be for the interest of the country to have fewer taxes, but these taxes to be fairly and impartially levied. He who occasions a defalcation in the revenue, whether an officer, or the subject liable to pay the duty, is not so much defrauding the treasury, as injuring his neighbour; for if taxes fall short, the deficiency will be made up by fresh articles of taxation, and thus the burden is unequally thrown on the conscientious.

In the exposition brought forward by Mr. Wardle, of the abuses in the management of the finances of the empire, the manner of collecting the revenue in Ireland is eminently conspicuous, and justifies the claim to the character to which our poor country has long been entitled, as *the land of jobbing*. Expensive as the collection of the revenue is in Great Britain, if the expense in Ireland were reduced to the same standard, the saving would be very considerable; but jobbing in

the supreme degree has for many years distinguished our Irish boards.

The cost of collecting the Irish Revenue is 11½ per cent., while the English costs 4½. The difference is enormous; after making every allowance for the additional expense of collecting a smaller sum, in which case the rate per cent is necessarily higher, but not in such disproportions.

Our countryman, Henry Parnell, in his speech on this occasion, pointed out the enormity of the charges on collection in Ireland, and stated, that an annual saving might be made of 388,000*l.*

In this view of politics we sometimes may be allowed to give it a prospective cast, and anticipate approaching events likely shortly to occur. We now venture to make some remarks on the processions which usually take place on the 12th of next month, and call upon the liberal of the Protestant part of the community, to consider the hurtful tendency of such processions. They certainly irritate the most numerous portion of our population, without producing the smallest salutary effect. They promote disunion, and weaken our strength. Last year, in the town of Mountrath, in the Queen's county, some distressing events were the consequences of this injudicious pageantry. The houses of several of the Catholics were attacked, and their windows broken. The priest of the town was compelled to fly, and expose himself to injury in his health, by wading across a river. He was previously in a state of ill health, and he died shortly after. At the ensuing assizes, a man was tried for breaking the windows, and found guilty. The judge sentenced him to imprisonment, with some pointed observations on the absurdity of his laying claim to loyalty, while he was violating the laws. Others were acquitted, and some of the witnesses were charged with being guilty of perjury, for the sake of gratifying revenge. Thus criminations and recriminations, much ill blood and bickerings probably with errors on both sides, resulted from this ill-judged observance of a day, and of an event, the commemoration of which, now, after the lapse of considerably more

than a century, might be suffered to fall into oblivion.

If we try this mode of irritation practised on our neighbours, by the rule of doing unto others as we wish others should do to us, it will not stand the test of examination. No one would like to have the triumph of a procession in opposition to his peculiar opinions, annually paraded before his view. The practise has a strong tendency to stir up the angry passions; and so far from being the test of the truth of Protestantism, or a discriminating badge of loyalty, is only the signal of disunion among neighbours. Sincerely attached to the peace and welfare of our country, we reprobate the practice, and most heartily do we wish to allay animosities, and heal the breaches of preceding generations.—We would by every means in our power endeavour to cherish a spirit of wise conciliation and concession, which would have a tendency to prevent the horrors which may attend a continuance of a system of mutual irritation and hostility. Ireland will never be a happy country so long as ancient animosities are kept alive in the breasts of the rival parties, which have so long distracted our unhappy country, paralyzed her energies, and rendered her sons, by a mistaken policy, hostile to each other.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.

THE SUPREME GOVERNING JUNTA,
TO THE SPANISH NATION.

It is three ages, Spaniards, since the salutary laws on which the nation founded its defence against the attempts of tyranny, have been destroyed.—Our fathers did not know how to preserve the precious deposit of liberty, which their fathers had bequeathed them, and although all the provinces of Spain successively struggled to defend it, our evil stars which now began to pursue us, have rendered useless those generous efforts.—After having silenced reason and justice, the laws from that time forward have been nothing else than an expression, more or less tyrannical, or more or less beneficent of a particular will.—Providence, as if to punish the loss of that beautiful prerogative

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of freemen, has sentenced us to be unhappy, and paralyzed our valour, arrested the progress of our understanding, protracted civilization, and after having blended and exhausted the fountains of prosperity, we have come to that condition, that an insolent tyrant has formed a project of subduing under his yoke the greatest nation of the globe, without reckoning upon its will, and despising its resistance.—In vain have there been some instances within these last three ages of disasters, in which the best directed will of the princes has attempted to remedy this, or the other plagues of the state.—In vain the increased illustration of Europe has lately inspired our statesmen with projects of reform both useful and necessary.—Buildings cannot be erected upon sands, and without fundamental and constituted laws to defend the good already done, and to prevent the evil which is intended to be done, it is useless for the philosopher in his study, and the public man in the theatre of business, to exert himself for the good of the people. The most useful meditations, the best combined projects, are either not put in execution, or if they should be, they immediately fall to the ground.—In the moment of a happy inspiration, succeeds another of an unfortunate one—to the spirit of economy and order, a spirit of prodigality and rapine—to a prudent and mild minister, an avaricious and mad favourite—to the moderation of a pacific monarch, the rage of an inhuman conqueror—and thus, without principles, without an established and fixed system, to which public measures and dispositions can be affixed, the ship of the state floats without her sails, without a helm or direction, until, as has happened to the Spanish monarchy, it is dashed to pieces on some rock by the hurricane of tyranny.—The evils which are derived from so vicious a beginning cannot be calculated, when they are accumulated in such a manner, that nothing less than a revolution can destroy them.—The Junta itself, in the midst of the power which you have placed in its hands; a power which makes them tremble on account of its unlimited extension, frequently

PPP